

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A20NEW YORK TIMES  
29 January 1986

# Pentagon and the Press: The War Goes On

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28 — When the Defense Department prevented the press from covering the first days of the invasion of Grenada in October 1983, editors erupted in anger, asserting that the people's right to know had been violated. Equally angry, military officers contended that the press could not be trusted to preserve security in the course of military operations.

After the dust settled, journalists and officers began talking about improving relations. A special commission of military officers and former journalists recommended greater access by the military and greater restraint by journalists. Seminars have been held at the top military schools, giving each side a chance to present its views to the other, face to face.

Today, with two years of discussion behind them, the soldiers and the scribes have declared a truce, at least on the surface. But underneath, many of the old animosities seem to remain.

## It May Get Worse

Some argue that these animosities may get worse, that the differences between the press and the military are, at heart, inherent to their conflicting roles in American society, not just to disagreements over press access and military security.

Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, in a recent speech, applauded the principle of a free press, and then came close to accusing the press of treason.

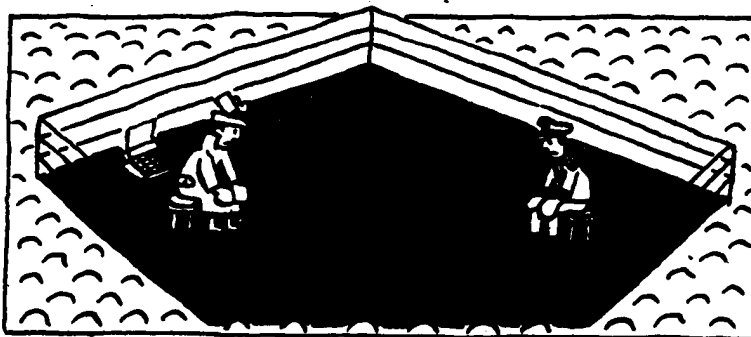
"Sometimes there seems to be little or no thought given," he said, "to whether publication of facts will harm the national security; whether it will give aid and comfort to our enemies; whether it will complicate the conduct of our foreign policy or, most important, whether it will endanger American lives."

Even before Mr. Weinberger spoke, journalists and military officers who have lamented the antagonisms were saying that they saw little evidence of progress.

"I think the most you could say is that we understand each other better, but no more than that — nothing else has changed," said Fred W. Friendly, the former CBS News producer who now directs seminars on the press and society at Columbia University and who has taken part in some of the military-press seminars.

Gen. Edward C. Meyer, a retired Chief of Staff of the Army, agrees. But, the general says, "a larger number of military officers are ready to speak out now if they aren't gagged."

Robert B. Sims, a retired naval officer who is the Pentagon's chief spokesman, contends that it has done



**'The most you could say is  
that we understand each other better.'**

*Fred W. Friendly*

its share to improve relations, particularly by organizing a press pool that might cover contingencies like Grenada as representative of the entire press corps. The pool has been run through three practice drills.

But Mr. Sims is critical of younger reporters with no military experience, saying many do not understand how the military works. He says the Defense Department plans to invite some on trips to the field to get a taste of military operations.

Over all, Mr. Sims adds, the complaints of the military against the press for seeing the dark side of life are much the same as those of other institutions. "The news media's problem with the military," he said, "doesn't just pertain to the military but is a problem with a lot of segments of society."

On the press side, Charles Corddry of The Baltimore Sun, the dean of the Pentagon press corps, sees little change in the military's attitude toward the press.

"I don't sense that things have improved," he said, "although some of the things they're doing are good. Pools are good for the press, who need educating, and good for the Defense Department."

The Grenada invasion helped bring into the open antipathies rooted in the Vietnam era, says Col. Harry G. Summers Jr., a retired Army officer

who has written on the lack of public support for the war in Vietnam. Most military officers felt that press coverage of the war was unfair, and many journalists felt that the military and other Government spokesmen were less than honest in their reports to the press.

"Grenada was a shock that scared everybody," Colonel Summers said. "I don't think either side realized the depth of the problem."

Although the climate is better among the older soldiers whose memories of Vietnam are fading, Colonel Summers agrees with Mr. Sims that the animosities are worse among military people who were too young for Vietnam and among younger journalists who have not been in military service.

"The follow-on generation in the military believes all the myths about the media losing the war in Vietnam," said Colonel Summers, now a military correspondent with U.S. News & World Report. "And the follow-on generation in journalism knows nothing about the military."

In the past two years, scores of journalists have participated in seminars at the National Defense University here or at the top Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force schools around the nation. From the seminars has emerged a clear conclusion that the issue of operational security,

the explanation given by the Pentagon when coverage of Grenada was blocked, has little to do with the antipathy of the military toward the press.

At the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., a retired admiral went to the heart of the matter. "Operational security is not the problem," said the admiral, who cannot be named under conference rules. "The problem is that when you write about us, you make us look bad."

Mr. Friendly said that from the military viewpoint, "the real problem is the lack of context," or telling the full story. The military, he added, thinks a two-minute television report or 1,000 words in a newspaper are too brief to tell everything that happened.

General Meyer made a similar point. "I don't think it's the military and the media in the context of war," he said, "but the military and the media in the way people function in peacetime."

At the National War College here, a reporter asked each officer around a table to state what bothered him most about the press. Arrogance, slanted news, invasion of privacy, inaccuracy and emphasizing bad news were among the replies. None mentioned the protection of operational security.

## 'Different Sets of Values'

At bottom are sharp differences in culture. The Twentieth Century Fund, a research foundation in New York, commissioned a study by journalists and military leaders last year that concluded: "The divide between the military and media is in danger of widening."

"Each tends to attract different personality types and to foster different sets of values," the study said. "Of necessity, military people are schooled to respect tradition, authority and leadership; obedience is an inescapable part of military life. In contrast, because journalists on occasion have the job of challenging official wisdom, their ranks tend to be filled with those who are more free-wheeling, irreverent and skeptical of authority."

Mr. Friendly agrees that there are built-in differences between soldiers and journalists. "The soldier hides behind national security," he said, "and the journalist hides behind the First Amendment."

With a touch of regret, he concluded: "There's no real answer."